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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [RO](#)
SUBJECT: DNI NEGROPONTE MEETING WITH OPPOSITION PSD
PRESIDENT MIRCEA GEOANA

Classified By: Amb. Nicholas Taubman for Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary: At a meeting with DNI Negroponte and the Ambassador, opposition PSD head Mircea Geoana evinced concern about a possible post-EU accession malaise in Romanian politics, with weak and divided governance for the next several years. Geoana was skeptical about prospects for early elections and favored creation of a "grand coalition" of leading moderate parties on the German model. On attitudes towards the U.S., Geoana said some "rebalancing" between Romania's "transatlanticist" and "European" orientations might take place, but geopolitics assured that Romania's fundamentally transatlanticist orientation was "safe" for at least two more generations. Geoana argued for a regional solution to the Kosovo issue, noting that the international community could move relatively fast on Kosovar independence if it was linked to a renewed commitment to the Balkan region as a whole. With EU entry for many Balkan nations unlikely, NATO had to pick up the slack as default "mentor" in the region. Geoana argued that Romania was wasting an opportunity to work with new Eastern European members of the EU in creating a new "Vilnius Group" encompassing the Baltics to the Black Sea. On intelligence matters, Geoana encouraged new links between Romanian parliamentary committees overseeing the intelligence community and their US counterparts. End Summary.

¶2. (C) Opposition PSD President Mircea Geoana met with Director of National Intelligence Negroponte and Ambassador Taubman October 29. Geoana prefaced the meeting by comparing Romania's political scene to an ice skating competition; Romania had performed superbly in the obligatory routines needed for acceptance into all of the right clubs--WTO, NATO, and now the European Union--but it was uncertain whether it could do as well in the "freestyle" segment now that the constraints of candidacy were lifted. He said Romanian politics exemplified the lack of an overall strategic vision among Romania's political leaders as well as a vicious political culture that stressed the "total demolition" of one's political enemies.

¶3. (C) Geoana was skeptical about prospects for early elections, noting that elections for the European Parliament would likely occur in May 2007, with municipal elections in June 2008 and a Presidential election taking place in 2009. President Basescu was alone in pushing for early elections, hoping to capitalize on his current high popularity ratings. Basescu also feared that a weak PD showing in future municipal elections could erode his prospects in the Presidential contest. Geoana opined that a reshuffle among coalition partners was possible depending on how long Prime Minister Tariceanu survived. Tariceanu was weakened, but still fighting for his political life. Geoana warned that if Tariceanu goes, Romania could return to the "piranha politics" of the 1990s, with Basescu installing a more

compliant puppet as Prime Minister.

14. (C) Regarding future coalition combinations, Geoana said that anything was possible, including continuation of the PD/PNL alliance; a strong PD combined with satellite parties; a PD/PSD alliance, or even a PSD/PNL government. Two likely options included a "new majority" centered around Basescu, or some sort of "grand coalition" akin to Germany. The latter option (which he preferred) would use as a pretext the need for mainstream Romanian parties to collectively meet the challenges of EU membership. A PD/PNL merger was unlikely given the liberals' pride in their 100-year history and traditions. Geoana anticipated that the next two and half years could prove an extraordinarily "unconstructive" time for Romanian politics, with political paralysis and loss of momentum after the January 1 EU accession. Romania risked following in Poland's footsteps in mismanaging the first few years after EU entry, providing an opening for extremist and populist voices to dominate Romanian politics in the future.

15. (C) On attitudes towards the United States, Geoana said that Romania was currently so pro-American that one had to anticipate a future rebalancing between its "transatlanticist" and "European" orientations. Geography would never allow Romania to "relax" and hence the current security construction with the United States was safe for at least two more generations. He added that the U.S. shouldn't take Romania's future pro-US orientation for granted or assume that it would be automatic. Geoana added that while he didn't like the President, he had to admit that Basescu was "solid" with regards to his transatlanticist inclinations. Geoana also noted the need to develop new institutions to anchor US-Romanian ties after USAID pulled out. These might include the Black Sea Trust Fund, the Aspen Institute, even the Harvard Club. He added that it was not a question of USG

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funding, since there was now a huge network of influential Romanians who knew and loved the United States, including many corporate leaders.

16. (C) On Kosovo, Geoana said that Kosovar independence must be linked to a "package" of measures for the Balkan region as a whole. Bringing Croatia into the EU and NATO without accounting for the rest of the Balkans was the wrong strategy. With the right "package", the international community could move relatively fast in terms of fostering Kosovo's independence, but changing the status quo in Kosovo must be backed by a renewed commitment to the Balkan region on the part of NATO and the EU. Geoana was doubtful that Macedonia or Albania were capable of qualifying for EU accession, thus handing NATO the default role of "mentor" to these states. Geoana argued for a strategy other than just "punishing" the Serbs, noting that the Serbian military understood what had to be done, but the Serbian public was still "intoxicated" with the idea of retaining Kosovo. Geoana added that the upcoming German EU Presidency was an opportunity for the United States to work closely with Chancellor Merkel on Kosovo. The relative weakness or lame duck status of other European leaders gave Merkel the opportunity to demonstrate that she could be a "global leader" on this and other issues. Geoana suggested that with the right preparation, Merkel would be receptive to working in tandem with President Bush on a renewed Kosovo strategy as part of Germany's bid for a successful EU presidency.

17. (C) Comparing Russia to "an athlete on steroids" Geoana said that he saw both Ukraine and Moldova slowly bending to growing Russian pressure, with Georgia increasingly isolated through Russian energy politics and other "booby traps" from Moscow. Geoana also accused President Basescu of harboring plans to trade Moldovan unification with Romania for tacit acquiescence to allowing Transnistria to become a Russian-run "Kaliningrad" to the east. Geoana said Romania was wasting an opportunity to work with new Eastern European members of the EU in creating a "new European neighborhood policy" from the

Baltics to the Black Sea, acting as a Vilnius Group writ large that could influence EU policy towards the East.

18. (C) On intelligence matters, Geoana said that the PSD had agreed to Senator Maior becoming the head of Romania's internal service. He said that it was "refreshing" to see a new generation take over the intelligence services given the need to remove the taint of the Ceaucescu-era Securitate, but both Maior and SRI Director Saftoiu were inexperienced and "needed help." He said that he was trying to institute a "new rule" in Romanian politics that the domestic intelligence directorship always go to an opposition politician, adding that this was a "precondition" for sending "one of our best young guys" for the post. Geoana also encouraged the DNI to promote contacts between Romanian parliamentary committees overseeing intelligence matters with their counterparts in the United States, as this would be an investment in a more democratic Romania and a better respected intelligence service.

19. (C) Comment: Mircea Geoana's views carry some weight as he is the heir presumptive in any future coalition government involving the PSD. His views on many issues--including his fundamentally transatlanticist orientation, his comments on Kosovo, and remarks on the desirability of creating an Eastern European bloc within the EU--track closely with those shared by many of his ruling coalition counterparts, underscoring that what separates the PSD from the ruling PD and PNL are frequently matters involving personalities, parties, and political nuance, not ideology or policy. Geoana's skepticism regarding the likelihood of early elections, on the other hand, reflects the fact that the PSD's prospects are not encouraging if President Basescu succeeds in getting an early election contest. End Comment.

Taubman